



# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## Fair Housing Committee

### MEETING MINUTES

March 2, 2011

Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

Candace Havens  
Director  
Planning & Development

Robert Muollo, Jr.  
Housing Planner

#### Members

Sheila Mondschein, Chair  
Susan Paley, Vice-Chair  
Philip Herr  
Henry Korman  
Josephine McNeil  
Esther Schlorholtz  
Doug Sweet

#### Members present:

Sheila Mondschein, Chair  
Susan Paley, Vice-Chair  
Esther Schlorholtz  
Josephine McNeil  
Phil Herr

**Staff Present:** Trisha Kenyon Guditz, Housing Programs Manager

**Public Present:** None

Sheila M., Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

**1. Minutes:** The minutes from the February 18, 2011 meeting were approved.

Esther followed up on the conversation at the February 2 meeting regarding accessible homeownership units. She remarked that it is harder for prospective home buyers with disabilities to qualify for mortgages because mortgages may not be affordable or suitable because of their circumstances. The issue of an insufficient number of qualified home buyers for the accessible unit at the Lexington Street project was more than an informational disconnect between developers and home buyers with disabilities which got raised at the February 2 meeting.

Sheila informed the members that the City was not successful at securing a second Fair Housing Initiatives Program grant from HUD's Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity office.

**2. Fair Housing Month ideas:** Sheila began the discussion about ideas for a fair housing event by updating the group about Robert's conversations with John MacGillivray, the City's Veterans Service Officer. Robert and John discussed developing a program on fair housing and veterans and having it aired on John's cable access program, *Sound Off!* John is anxious to do a show and it could air in April. Barbara Chandler, MBHP Fair Housing Manager, offered to be part of the conversation.

Robert and Sheila also talked about a fair housing forum which would focus generally on fair housing and then move to a discussion about accessibility issues.

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They thought that the forum could also be targeted to seniors with mobility concerns. Participants in last year's landlord fair would be invited to participate in Section 8 discrimination experiences. Barbara also volunteered to be part of this event as well.

Phil asked how many people would be likely to attend a fair housing forum.

Josephine said that reasonable accommodation is more likely to be an engaging topic for a forum and not accessibility per se.

Esther added that Barbara is good at talking about issues from the point of view of persons with disabilities. She referred to Barbara's *Welcoming Communities* discussion at Boston Private Bank and Trust in 2009.

The members decided to focus the fair housing event conversation on reasonable accommodations and reasonable modifications.

Phil suggested also identifying four Newton residents who have different kinds of disabilities who would be willing and interested in speaking on a panel about their experiences in Newton. The event's focus would be on disability accommodation in housing and related facilities, not access per se. The Fair Housing Committee could co-sponsor the forum with the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities (MCPD).

Both Jason Rosenberg and Doug Sweet were identified as potential speakers.

Barbara will be invited to participate.

Susan and Esther will see if their respective banks will contribute refreshments.

**3. MBHP draft report:** Barbara will provide a second draft to housing staff and the Fair Housing Committee on March 18. Staff needs to ensure that the Mayor is briefed on the draft via Candace Havens. The Mayor will then get a copy of the draft, too. After the Mayor and the Fair Housing Committee have reviewed the draft, the report will be forwarded to all the City department heads that were interviewed by Barbara, the MCPD and the Newton Housing Authority. The department heads, MCPD and the Newton Housing Authority will have two weeks to review and provide comments on the report.

Josephine recommended that the draft report be accompanied by a schedule to enable the Mayor to see what the overall review process is. For example:

**March 18:** Second draft from MBHP to staff, the Fair Housing Committee, Candace/Mayor. The Fair Housing Committee will ask for an opportunity to meet with the Mayor.

**Est. March 23:** After feedback from these initial stakeholders, the draft report is circulated to appropriate department heads.

**Est. April 7:** All comments forwarded to Barbara.

The members also discussed the content of the accompanying cover letter. The letter, which Sheila agreed to draft, needs to include the historical context of the report e.g. why the report was commissioned, who the Fair Housing Committee is, etc. It also needs to describe any changes to the existing review and compliance system that have already occurred such as ISD's agreement to review any federally-funded housing project for compliance with both MAAB and all applicable federal accessibility requirements (Fair Housing Act, Section 504 and/or ADA). Sheila will circulate the draft cover letter.

**4. Other business:** Sheila reported that the Human Rights Commission is showing the film on the Myrtle Baptist Church and the displacement that occurred with the construction of the turnpike on June 16.

Sheila also informed the members that she was asked by Candace through Amy- to represent the Fair Housing Committee by serving on a caucus for fair housing advocacy. The caucus is part of the overall implementation of the sustainable cities grant which is being managed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

The meeting was adjourned.